

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

THE FAMOUS PASTOR OF BROOKLYN'S PLYMOUTH CHURCH.

A MOST WONDERFUL CAREER.

His Own Story of His Younger Days. Plymouth Church and His Pastorate There—His Political Career—Trips to England—His Devotion to the Union.

[Special Correspondence.]

New York, March 7.

"Henry Ward Beecher is dying!" was the news passed from month to month in the metropolis Saturday afternoon. And the intelligence spread rapidly—so rapidly that by the time the newspapers were out with their "extras" it had seemingly reached the remotest part of the big city.

There was, of course, a general disinclination to believe the report at first, so often have similar rumors been set afloat before, but this time the statement was true. One of the greatest preachers of the times—by many held to be the greatest—was suffering from his last illness. It might be a few hours and it might be days before the end should come, but it was certain to be not very far away.



HENRY WARD BEECHER.

To everybody the news came with a shock, which was rendered the more intense because of the robust health Plymouth's pastor had enjoyed of late. Newspaper "extras" met with a large sale all the evening, and the Sunday newspapers, which all contained long articles recounting the incidents of his life and detailing the particulars of his sickness, were eagerly bought up the next morning. The scene at Plymouth church on Sunday was most impressive. Whatever views may be held by others regarding Mr. Beecher's remarkable career, it is certain that the members of his own flock are loyal to him to the core.

Most people who will read this have already become familiar with the cardinal dates in Mr. Beecher's life.

He was born at Litchfield, Conn., June 24, 1813, being the fourth son of Lyman Beecher and Roxana Forté Beecher. He studied first at a Latin school in Boston, then entered Amherst college, from which he was graduated in 1834, and then took a theological course under his father at Lane Theological seminary, Cincinnati, O. He first settled as a Presbyterian minister in Lawrenceburg, Ind., in 1837, removed two years later to Indianapolis, and became pastor of the Plymouth Congregational church, Brooklyn, in 1847, and although his wonderful talents and his enormous capacity for work have made him eminent as a journalist, a lecturer and a politician, he has always been preeminently a preacher, and in many respects the foremost preacher in America. He was married in 1847 to Eunice White Bullard at about the time he received the call to his first pastorate at Lawrenceburg. Of the ten children born to Mr. and Mrs. Beecher, but four are now living.

BEECHER'S YOUNGER DAYS.

The Story of His Youth as Told By Himself.

A New York newspaper man, a reporter for The World, went to Henry Ward Beecher one day to get from his own lips a story of his childhood. "He said, 'perhaps no different from that of others seventy years ago. The little ones in those days were not given the consideration that is now accorded them, and properly so, too. A literature for children was not dreamed of. There were no children's festivals and holidays, no Christmas and New Year's parties. The only thing that brought any special favor was Thanksgiving, when New England housewives vied with one another in the composition of unique pies in limitless quantity. 'I didn't have any jumping jacks, nor tops, nor marbles, nor toys of any kind. It doesn't seem to me that I knew any boys to play with, either. We lived in a part of the village where there didn't seem to be any boys. 'And so I was left alone. My father was kept busy with his pastoral duties, and my mother had so many other children to attend to that little attention was paid to me. Still I was not lonesome. I was not fond of reading, but I used to like to tramp about the fields and down by the brooks and among the ferns and bracken. I would go on a hunt for sweet flag and asparagus, and I knew just where to find the asparagus. I found plenty to do.

"Sometimes my father would whip me. I remember that he used to tell me that the whipping hurt him more than it did me. It was hard to believe, because he was a strong man, but I believed it, and it used to make me cry to be told so; then of course I had to cry when the whips began, and, all in all, those were very dull episodes of my life.

He gave this picture of himself at school; his first teacher was known as the Widow Kilbourn. "A heavy image of myself comes to me—a lazy, dreamy boy, with his head on the desk, half asleep, looking at the ceiling of a great lecture hall, and the lowing of the cows and the tinkling of their bells, brought in the open door across the sunny fields and meadows."

It was after he had passed some time at his father's school for girls—the only boy among forty young ladies—and had studied a year at the Boston Latin school, that he made up his mind that he wanted to go to sea. Of this period in his life he said:

"My father let me read the stories of Nelson and Capt. Cook. The adventure fever that often seizes boys took hold of me. I had all sorts of fancy dream pictures of what I might do in the jungles and deserts of the Orient.

"I used to lounge about the docks and wharves in Boston and listen to the shouts of the sailors and watch the great merchantmen make ready for their voyage to the Indies. At last I could stand it no longer. I determined to go to sea, and had actually made all arrangements when my father discovered my purpose by chance.

Just promised him."

It was while at college that he fell in with a philologist. A great friendship sprang up between the two, and they used often to go out and lecture to the country people about Amherst on the science of the "lamps." But he declared that his efforts in that line were "only in the pastorate Mr. Beecher said:

"Of his first pastorate Mr. Beecher said:

"How poor we were!

"There were only about twenty persons in the little white-washed church. I bought some lamps and I filled them and lighted them. I swept the church and dusted the benches and kindled the fire, and I didn't ring the bell only because there wasn't any.

"It doesn't occur to me now that Lawrenceburg was remarkable for anything but a superabundance of distilleries. I used to marvel how many leave distilleries could be put in so small a town. But there they were, flourishing right in the very face of the gospel that my little flock and I were preaching in the shadows of the chimneys.

"Well, my next move was to Indianapolis. There I had a more considerable congregation, though I was still far from rich in the world's goods.

"I remember very well how I borrowed a paint pot and brushes and gave my house a fresh coat—it was yellow, I believe.

"I always had a fondness for journalistic work, especially if it was of an agricultural nature. At Indianapolis I edited the farm column of a newspaper and found it pleasant and remunerative. I suppose, though, that all newspaper work is like that. That, at any rate, was my dearest recreation—I thoroughly enjoyed it.

"I believe I was very happy during my eight years out there. I liked the people. There was a hearty frankness, a simplicity in their mode of life, an unselfish intimacy in their social relations that attracted me. They were new people—uninformed and uneducated, like the land they lived on—but they were earnest and honest and strong.

"But theague shook us out of the state. My wife's health gave away and we were forced to come east."

BEECHER'S FIRST SERMON.

The Quaint Rural Church in Which It Was Delivered.

Henry Ward Beecher's first sermon, if we may believe the traditions of the place, at Batavia, O., in 1835. His brother George was pastor of the church at Batavia at the time, and Henry Ward, who was not yet ordained, passed a part of a vacation there. The young pastor was indisposed one Sunday and invited his brother to fill the pulpit. The request was complied with, and the congregation was very much pleased with the sermon that was preached. Henry Ward Beecher was but 22 years of age then, and there are old residents of Batavia who still remember the young man's bright, boyish face, his sweet, resonant voice and the earnestness and the enthusiasm of his manner. The old church has for many years now been a lively stable, and the cut given shows the building in the days of its late degradation. Perhaps it has been torn down by this time.



THE OLD CHURCH AT BATAVIA.

George Beecher's career was closed while still a young man. He was passionately fond of shooting, and one day, when out on an expedition of this sort, he blew into his loaded gun, which discharged, and he was instantly killed.

It was held by many who knew both brothers, that George Beecher, had he lived, would have developed greater power as a preacher than Henry Ward.

PLYMOUTH CHURCH.

Mr. Beecher Its First and Only Pastor.

Plymouth church has known no other pastor than Henry Ward Beecher. Its house of worship is the same in appearance as when it was first dedicated, a year after it was built. It is a huge brick building of great architectural simplicity. It is 105 feet in length, 80 feet in width, and 43 feet in height from floor to ceiling. It has a seating capacity of 2,300. In marked contrast with the otherwise plain interior is the immense organ, which cost \$27,000. In the rear of the church is a building that will accommodate over 1,000 Sunday school children.

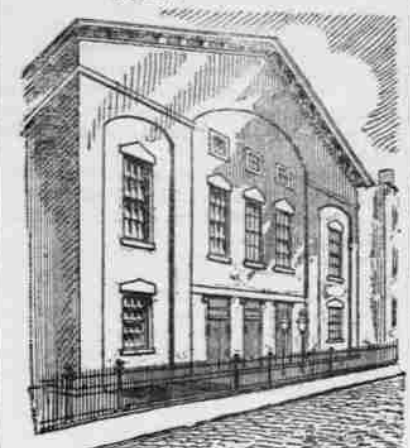
In 1846 a lot of land on Cranberry street, Brooklyn, which he had been occupied since 1823 by the First Presbyterian church, was purchased by John T. Howard with the idea of establishing a Congregational church. On May 8, 1847, David Hale, of New York, Ira Payne, John T. Howard, Charles Rowland, and others, met in Henry C. Bowen's hall at the house of the latter, resolved themselves into an association of trustees of the new church, and decided to begin holding services at once. Mr. Beecher spoke at the anniversary of the American Home Mission society during the next week, and made a good impression that he was invited to preach at the opening service of Plymouth church. His sermon was so well received that he was invited to become pastor of the new organization, and he accepted. It is generally held that he was influenced much in his decision by a feeling that had arisen in Indianapolis that he was somewhat too radical in the expression of his views upon slavery.

Some of Mr. Beecher's most prominent parishioners there were bitterly opposed to the abolition, which he publicly named by a Christian minister. But he emphasized his position by early introducing into the synod a resolution declaring that every minister should preach a thorough exposition and condemnation of slavery. He preached the first sermon upon the life of Moses, the bondage of the children of Israel under Pharaoh and their deliverance. His hearers were electrified by a searching and merciless exposure of American slavery and a scathing denunciation of the whole institution. There was talk and excitement, of course, but Mr. Beecher persisted in openly attacking the system, and through his persistence his church became one of the strongholds of the anti-slavery cause.

Before his installation as pastor of Plymouth church he had to submit to an examination. Among the questions put to him was the following: "Do you believe in the perseverance of the saints?" asked by Dr. Humphrey. "I was brought up to believe that doctrine," replied Mr. Beecher, "and I did believe it till I went out west and saw how easily men lived when they went out there. I Christians lived when they went out there. I But Mr. Beecher passed through the ordeal, and on October 10, 1847, he entered upon the duties, continued through the remainder of his life, as pastor of Plymouth church. One of his first acts was to distinctly state from the pulpit that his principles and beliefs. Plymouth pulpit he would "preach Christ living and full of love, by whose standards all men should rule their daily acts, advocate the temperance cause and fight on the side of anti-slavery." There was no need for him to wait in order to prove his words by immediate deeds, for the storm burst almost immediately. Mr. Beecher's fighting blood was up, and he threw himself into the thick of the conflict. In his church, in lectures throughout the country, in sermons, in his writings and in his daily intercourse with men, Mr.

Beecher invigorated against bowing to the slave power.

Under his power Plymouth church rapidly increased in numbers and influence. The year 1849 brought the first revival of his pastorate, which was followed by many others in succeeding years.



PLYMOUTH CHURCH.

Mr. Beecher's ideas of church discipline were somewhat peculiar and led to a memorable scene at one of the Friday night talks in 1855.

There was an unusual lack of spirit in the discussion until Mr. Raymond started to his feet and rather excitedly charged Mr. Beecher with having systematically and persistently for long years taught his congregation that they ought to do only what they felt like doing; if they did not want to come to church or prayer meeting, why, stay away; if a person felt like being a Roman Catholic or a Universalist, why, be whichever he or she liked; that Mr. Beecher had never drilled his soldiers, and had neglected his flock through his fear to displease somebody by a strict discipline. "It is not right," said he, "for you to teach the children that they are to do only what pleases them. You should teach them self-denial." Mr. Beecher plainly showed his surprise when he was being arraigned, but when the indictment was ended he was as serene as a summer day. "Well," said he, "there may be a good deal of truth in what you say. I have taught the latest individual freedom. Your conduct tonight shows that you read his tract and sprung up, for if it had not been for the kindness of me as you have now. In no other church in the world could this thing happen. I am not mad or chagrined at your remarks. Another point: You say I don't drill this army. No, sir; I do not. I am the general, and the soldiers are the people. I want every man to do that sort of work. I want every man to do right because it gives him pleasure—not when it is self-denial."

BEECHER AS A PUBLIC MAN.

His Career During the War and Afterward.

When, in 1854, the "Missouri Compromise" was repealed by congress Mr. Beecher was among the first to express the indignation felt by those who held that this was a breach of good faith, and to declare against the policy of allowing slavery to enter when it had once been excluded. The great battle-ground in Kansas, where men with the northern repugnance to slavery met slaveholders from Missouri and their gangs of slaves, purposing to establish the institution on its soil. From his pulpit Mr. Beecher declared that force must be used to prevent this if possible. His words resulted in the starting of a subscription in Plymouth church to furnish every eastern family going to Kansas with a Bible and rifle. When Fremont was nominated Mr. Beecher took the stump in his behalf, and worked with pen and tongue four years later for the election of Abraham Lincoln. When the war broke out a regiment was raised from Plymouth church, and Mr. Beecher's eldest son was one of its officers. The pastor often visited "the boys," as he used to call them, before they went into actual service. At about this time he assumed the editorship of The New York Independent in order to secure a medium through which he could speak directly to the people. In 1863 he went to England with the avowed intention of recuperating his health, but while there he made many addresses for the purpose of showing the English that the government of this country was in the right of the struggle. His experience was a stormy one, and he was well nigh mobbed at several points, receiving his roughest treatment, perhaps, at Liverpool, where he was stoned and beaten and subjected to many indignities. But he succeeded in forcing the angry crowd which had been inflamed by those who favored the cause of the Confederacy, and before he returned home he had secured the general respect of the people of England. In speaking of this in a private letter written at the time he said: "England will be enthusiastically right providing we hold on and gain victories. But England has an intense and yearning sense of the value of success."

After the war Mr. Beecher, who had always been a Republican, went south and looked over the ground. When the reconstruction period came on he took a stand not in exact conformity to his party, embodying his views in a sermon on the "Forgiveness of Injuries." The result was the severing of his connection with The Independent. Henry C. Bowen, its then editor, declaring in its columns that the paper was not responsible for Mr. Beecher's views. Mr. Beecher was not particularly displeased at this, and in 1864, when, as everybody remembers, he came out for Cleveland.

IN CONCLUSION.

Beecher as a Writer and Speaker—The Tilton Scandal.

It is doubtful if Mr. Beecher would ever have been much of a speaker had it not been for the unrelenting care and attention given to his elocutionary training, while he was at school at Mt. Pleasant, by Professor John E. Lovell. This gentleman taught the lad correct enunciation and good delivery, and gave to the world a great orator. His achievements on the lecture platform before, during and after the war were so conspicuous as to need but passing mention here. He began writing when in college. He used for a time an anti-slavery tract, "The Slaves and a horticultural paper in Indianapolis. Soon after removing to New York he began contributing to The Independent, of which he was editor in chief from 1851 to 1854. In 1850 he became editor of The Christian Union. In addition to his contributions to these papers he wrote a series of "Eyes and Ears Papers" and a novel called "Norwood" for The New York Ledger. Many volumes of his sermons have been published. His writings which have been collected in book form are: "Sermons from 1820 to 1874," "Speech (Elmhurst report) at Manchester, England," "A Summer Parable" (sermons and morning services of prayer at the Twin Mountain house in August, 1874), "Yale Lectures on Preaching, 1872-73-74," "Lectures to Young Men," "Morning and Evening Exercises," "Star Papers—Experiences of Art and Nature," "Pleasant Talk About Fruits, Flowers and Farming," "Lecture Room Talks," "The Overturn of Angels and 'The Life of Christ' (Vol. I). The last mentioned work has not been finished, and it was because of the breach of contract in neglecting it that he was sued not long ago. He was at work on it when he was stricken down.

The circumstances of the Tilton scandal are well known. Tilton, who succeeded Beecher as editor of The Independent, had some trouble with his wife, and Beecher, of whose church both were members—advised her to wait in order to prove his words by immediate deeds, for the storm burst almost immediately. Mr. Beecher's fighting blood was up, and he threw himself into the thick of the conflict. In his church, in lectures throughout the country, in sermons, in his writings and in his daily intercourse with men, Mr.

simulating the affections of his wife. The trial, which began in January, 1875, lasted four months. Judges Nelson, McCreary and Reynolds presided. Mr. Beecher's cause here the best in the country. They were William M. Evans, Roger A. Pryor, Thomas G. Shearman, John K. Porter and Benjamin F. Tracy. Pitted against them on the side of Mr. Tilton were William A. Beach, W. A. Fullerton and Samuel D. May.

The jury was locked up a week and failed to agree, the last ballot standing 9 to 3 for Beecher, when they were discharged.

The testimony during the progress of the trial was of the most extraordinary and contradictory character, and many of the phrases uttered during its progress and in the documents put in evidence have since become proverbial. A "tripartite agreement" which was brought out was among the unique features of the case. Tilton was now in Europe, with his daughters. Mrs. Tilton has disappeared from view. Mr. Beecher's popularity was as great as before the trial. In his "Autobiography," which was published in 1880, he writes, "the 'mutual friend,' whom every body will remember, is dead."

Of Mr. Beecher's liberal and tolerant temperance views, his famous "trial" and water speech and a hundred other matters with which his name will always be associated, it is needless to speak. His last trip to Europe was a social and oratorical success, and on his return he was elected Moderator of the Union of the World.

There will always be conflicting views regarding his sincerity and moral worth, but no one will deny that he occupied a very large place in the history of religion, politics and journalism in America.

THE HON. RUFUS BLODGETT.

A Democrat Who Was Elected Senator by New Jersey Republicans.

Rufus Blodgett, Democrat, selected senator in New Jersey by the Republicans, was born in Dorchester, N. H., Nov. 9, 1834. His father was a farmer, and young Rufus helped him in the summer time, and attended the district school in the winter time. Though not brilliant he was very industrious, and stood well in those branches which were to his liking. His earliest ambition was to become a locomotive engineer, and while yet a mere boy he constructed a model of an engine. Before he was 20 he managed to get employment on the New Jersey Southern railroad, and later rose to the post of engineer, becoming one of the most competent on the line. Some time after Blodgett became an engineer, he got into financial difficulties and a tie up was imminent. He was then employed by the New Jersey Southern railroad, and later rose to the post of engineer, becoming one of the most competent on the line. Some time after Blodgett became an engineer, he got into financial difficulties and a tie up was imminent. He was then employed by the New Jersey Southern railroad, and later rose to the post of engineer, becoming one of the most competent on the line.

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